

Understanding the project life cycle

Analyzing the different project phases

**Video:** Phases in action: Initiating and planning  
4 min

**Video:** Phases in action: Executing and closing  
5 min

**Reading:** Summary of the project phases  
10 min

**Ungraded Plugin:** Identify: Phases of the project life cycle  
30 min

**Practice Quiz:** Test your knowledge: Analyzing the different project phases  
4 questions

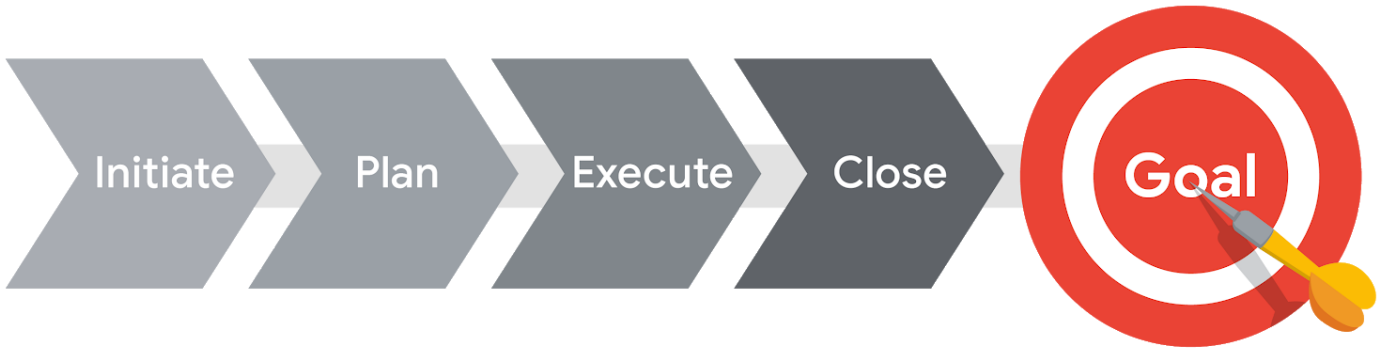
Comparing project management methodologies and approaches

Review: The project management life cycle and methodologies

# Summary of the project phases

The **project life cycle** is the path for your project from start to finish. Each project phase builds toward the subsequent phase and helps to create a structure for the project. To recap, the main phases of the project life cycle are: initiating the project, making a plan, executing and completing tasks, and closing the project.

In this reading, we will summarize each phase of the project life cycle.



## The project life cycle

### Initiate the project

In this phase, ask questions to help set the foundation for the project, such as:

- Who are the stakeholders?
- What are the client’s or customer’s goals?
- What is the purpose and mission of the project?
- What are the measurable objectives for the team?
- What is the project trying to improve?
- When does this project need to be completed?
- What skills and resources will the project require?
- What will the project cost? What are the benefits?

### Make a plan

In this phase, make a plan to get your project from start to finish.

- Create a detailed project plan. What are the major milestones? What tasks or deliverables make up each milestone?
- Build out the schedule so you can properly manage the resources, budget, materials, and timeline. Here, you will create an itemized budget.

### Execute the project

In this phase, put all of your hard work from the first two phases into action.

- Monitor your project team as they complete project tasks.
- Break down any barriers that would slow or stop the team from completing tasks.
- Help keep the team aware of schedule and deliverable expectations.
- Address weaknesses in your process or examine places where your team may need additional training to meet the project’s goals.
- Adapt to changes in the project as they arise.

### Close the project

In this phase, close out the project.

- Identify that your team has completed all of the requested outcomes.
- Release your team so they can support other projects within the company.
- Take time with your team to celebrate your successes!
- Pass off all remaining deliverables and get stakeholder approval.
- Document the lessons you and your team learned during the project.
- Reflect on ways to improve in the future.

## Key takeaway

Each phase of the project life cycle has its own significance and reason for existing. By following the project life cycle, you’re ensuring that you are:

- Capturing the expectations of your customer
- Setting your project up for success with a plan
- Executing project tasks and addressing any issues that arise
- Closing out your project to capture any lessons learned

As you continue through this course, we will walk through each project phase in more detail.

